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To Cambodia--and back?

Mr. Nixon must have the bulwark of a united nation as he embarks on the perilous course he has set for the next several weeks. If the already visible and grave hazards were to be intensified by the aspect of an America falling apart in angrily warring factions, the nation's prospects would be needlessly worsened. The Commander-in-Chief has committed the nation; the operation is under way. That much cannot be changed.

But Mr. Nixon also told the nation that the excursion into Cambodia is a one-shot operation that he expects to last six weeks to two months. "Our purpose is not to occupy the areas. Once enemy forces are driven out of these sanctuaries and their military supplies destroyed, we will withdraw."

Such an operation should take no more than 60 days at the outside; if the end has not been achieved in that space, the President will have been proved wrong in his "one-shot" assessment. In that case, Congress and the American people should strongly demand that the venture be abandoned.

For the observers with long memories are already drawing uncomfortably apt parallels between Mr. Nixon's Thursday night assurances and the words spoken nearly six years ago by another President in other circumstances. "The United States intends no rashness and seeks no wider war," said Lyndon Johnson as he asked the Congress to put a legal base under the combat in Vietnam by adopting the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Almost 50,000 Americans have died in the subsequent widening of that war.

Mr. Johnson believed what he was saying then, and we do not challenge Mr. Nixon's sincerity now: You can believe that a policy he stakes his political future on is a policy he believes in. This does not excuse the almost conspiratorial secrecy that inspired the President to keep even his fellow Republicans in the Senate in the dark as to his plans on a matter so near the heart of public concern. Evidently the Pentagon persuaded him that now was the time to commit the nation first and inform it later — which lends substance to the Senate's concern over the President's ability to bypass the constitutional assignment of the warmaking authority to Congress.

But granted some evidence of tactical chicanery, we do not question that Mr. Nixon believed implicitly that he is, as he said, saving American lives in Vietnam and avoiding defeat and humiliation for "the world's most powerful nation."

The major danger is not in any lack of sincerity or political courage. The major danger is that the President and his advisers do not comprehend how things have changed since a military leader could safely postulate that if only he dropped enough bombs and spent enough lives, right — that is to say, might — would prevail. It has not been true for a long time; certainly it did not prove out when the scores were finally totaled after World War II; it has not proved true in Vietnam.

Nor does it seem likely to prove true in Cambodia. Already the enemy has begun withdrawing from the sanctuary within the area of the Parrot's Beak. It is characteristic of the enemy not to stand still, or do the expected. Surely in a decade in Vietnam we must have learned that not even the "most powerful nation on Earth" can destroy an enemy it can't find.

So there are many who wince when the President of the United States speaks of "power" and "defeat" and "victory" in the same way a Bismarck might have spoken of them — and of "humiliation" as coldly unthinkable for this majestic nation.

Perhaps humiliation is unthinkable. But when it comes to disengaging from a war that has been insatiably consuming lives and treasure, a war without visible point, a war that defies our most ingenious efforts to win or even lose gracefully, a touch of humility may become the key to whatever "success" an American President can hope to salvage. If Mr. Nixon will acknowledge this he may still have to worry about his second term, but not about his place in history.

Progress on subway plan

The City Council has cleared the way for a referendum on a bond issue to finance demolition of the Loop L and expansion of the subway system in the central area. Under authority granted it by the Legislature, the Council created a downtown taxing district in which the referendum will take place this summer or fall.

The district's 52,000 voters will be asked to approve a special tax increase, applying only to property within the district, of up to 25 cents per $100 valuation. The "dream project," as it has been called, would cost $600 million, of which $400 million will be sought from the federal government.

Local merchants and other business property owners, who will be assuming a major share of the extra tax burden, are strongly behind the project. Apart from ridding the Loop of the esthetic pollution of the unsightly and noisy L, the project envisions extended subway lines west to the U. of I. Chicago Circle campus, north to the John Hancock Center area and south to McCormick Place. The new network would also provide a direct link between the commuter railroad stations and the Loop.

No single undertaking is more important to the future viability of the central business district and the many new apartment units that now provide homes for an ever-growing number of downtown residents. The district, unfortunately, also encompasses some deplorable slums. But in the long run the disadvantaged and the affluent will both benefit from the project. It deserves the broadest possible backing at the polls.

Which antipollution plan?

The City of Chicago wants to continue in its exemption from state air pollution control laws, and there seems to be good reason why it should be permitted to do so. Whether the city's regulations are stricter than the state's may be debatable, as is appearing in a current series of hearings on the exemption, but the City Council has strengthened the ordinance against high-sulphur coal, and the city already has a relatively strong program at work to get compliance.

The new limitations upon high-sulphur coal would reduce its use sharply over a period of time, and they tend to undo some of the damage done last year when the deadlines for compliance were postponed. One of the city's major polluters, the Commonwealth Edison Co., has complained that it may not be able to meet the new requirements, but this response is to be expected. Others may make the same objection also. But the subject has been long debated, the polluters have been given every consideration, pollution is a distressing problem, and we suspect that if the offenders realize that they must comply, they can.

The city, then, has been in the air pollution control business for a long time, and the state is coming late to the scene with its regulations and its enforcement attempts. Both the city and the state, however, have the tools in law to clean up the air, and they should be used at their most effective level.

Air pollution is not exclusively a city or even a state problem. It is universal. Chicago can and must clean up its air, but at the same time other polluters — such as the steel mills in Indiana — must be controlled. They too pollute Chicago's air, and the air of many another area in our region. Whether Chicago gets its exemption extended or not, all levels or government must work together for the common environmental good.

John Fischetti

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"Dear President Nixon . . . what really tickled my funny bone was when you said you were sending troops to Cambodia to save lives. . . ."

Your views of the news

'And this is disengagement?'

It is my recollection that Lyndon Johnson withdrew from the race for the Presidency because he got the message finally that a large number of people in this country wanted an end to the killing and cost of Vietnam.

Richard Nixon was elected partly because he said he had a plan to get us out. That plan turned out to be a slow withdrawal of our troops and the Vietnamization of that tragic war.

There are still about 430,000 troops in Vietnam. The announcement that 150,000 troops will be withdrawn over the next 12 months, or an average of about 12,000 per month, was disappointing.

If this is disengagement, the meaning of the word has been changed. Rather it seems that this announcement was intended to keep those who want an end to our involvement off balance.

What will it take for Mr. Nixon to see the light as Mr. Johnson did? Loss of popular following? Threat of the loss of election? Mr. Nixon perhaps can afford to wait and see, but can or should the thousands of GIs who will die?

LEONARD FUCHS
Chicago

'Penny-pinching on schools'

Proposals to aid parochial schools at a time when Chicago schools are threatened with September cutbacks show insensitivity on the part of the Legislature and the governor.

Everyone assumes that the gradual phasing out of parochial schools will have dire consequences as "wave upon wave of Catholic school children will inundate the public schools."

What would happen in actuality would simply be the secularization of parochial schools into public schools.

Should this occur, Catholic parents would join others to improve the public school system into which their children would be absorbed. Vested interests make people respond, and Catholic parents would have an immediate vested interest in improvement of the public schools.

Money to buy up Catholic schools would then come from the state. This is what the legislators fear—having to fund an enlarged public school system when they are starving the present one.

The legislators want "education on the cheap" by token support of Catholic schools and penny-pinching of public schools.

The time is now for Catholic parents to unite with others to close the "money-mouth" gap (the distance between the schools' needs and the lip service with which it is "paid").

GERALD R. ADLER
Evanston

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If we're going to give tax money to aid church-operated schools, then it's high time churches begin to pay their fair share of income and property taxes on their many income-producing properties which have no relationship to the free practice of religion.

Chicago LOUIS BERMAN

'So this is Nixon's secret plan'

At long last we now know Mr. Nixon's secret plan to end the Vietnam War: Just turn it in for a new and bigger model, the Indochina War.

Now all we need worry about is what other secret plans he may have.

PETER MOLDAUER
Naperville

Red sails into the sun set

I predict the Chinese will be sending men to the moon in less than two years. They will be Russians.

P.S. Keep Mike Royko on vacation. I enjoy reprints of his best columns.

J.B.
Oak Park

Letters must carry the writer's complete address.

'Sensible boating ban in Du Page County'

The recent ban on boating on Salt Creek and the east branch of the Du Page River is a sensible decision by the Du Page County Forest Preserve Commission. According to tests, coliform counts on Salt Creek are 100 times, the east branch 20 times and the west branch 10 times the State Sanitary Water Board standard.

Much of the effluent of municipal sewage treatment plants is or could be chlorinated to reduce the danger. Private septic tanks, overflowing or directly piped into the river, are another matter. At the rate of 100 gallons per person per day of water usage, a considerable amount of untreated sewage effluent from private sources is dumped into inland waters.

It would seem imperative that active detection and enforcement mechanisms be put into effect if we are to resolve the problem. The successful programs of this type that have been instituted elsewhere have required the active joint efforts of the county health officer and the district attorney. Apathy on the part of either of these two will result in continued and increasing pollution with all its inherent dangers.

The demonstration project involving the west branch of the Du Page that was recently advocated is a step in the right direction and only good can come from it.

ROBERT F. LOCKE
Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine and Community Health
University of Illinois
Naperville

'Mental health monitor plan dangerous'

L. F. Palmer Jr. last week reported that the Joint Commission on the Mental Health of Children has proposed "a universal monitoring system" with "centralized data banks" which would collect information on all children and their families and "monitor" their development.

The supposed aim of this dangerous scheme is to attack "mental illness" in children. The plan neglects the fact that there is no one universal standard of what constitutes "mental health."

Any attempt by a government commission to universally eliminate mental "illness" in children will, in effect, be an attempt to eliminate those kinds of personalities that the government does not approve.

For instance, the commission would almost certainly want to eliminate, or at least lessen, aggressive tendencies. But aggressive tendencies may lead in other directions than crime.

Aggressiveness probably is an essential prerequisite for vigorous, determined political dissent. Thus the elimination of aggressiveness could mean the end of democracy as we know it.

The commission's scheme would be a major step toward universal compulsory behavioral engineering. As this behavioral engineering grows more and more extensive and effective, people would become, to all intents and purposes, mere robots, designed and built to serve specific purposes, like automobiles or adding machines. The essential human characteristics of unpredictability and uncontrollability would disappaer.

THEODORE J. KACZYNSKI
Lombard

The great dog battle shapes up

My family and I are very pleased to hear that dogs are being barred from the Chicago parks. It is true that people are frightened by them, and this spoils the parks for recreation.

However, I feel that men should also be kept out of the park. At times, I bike through the park, in a lonely area, and come across a man, and am quite startled. This is an unpleasant and easily remedied situation.

Also, older women frequently are critical of my attire and disturb me, and I would like them kept out of the Chicago parks.

Small children, who are noisy, destructive and generally antisocial, should also be kept out of the public parks, so that the parks can be enjoyed by those who rightfully deserve to frequent them.

Evanston RUTH LAZAR

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I am completely in favor of banning dogs in the parks whether on a leash or not.

Several times last summer I saw families come to the park with a lunch basket or box, spread out a cloth on the grass, not knowing what may have already been on the grass, spread out their lunch only to have an unleashed dog make a rush for the food. Sometimes it took all of the family and finally the dog's owner to get the dog away from the food.

Even if this is only one case in a hundred this alone should be enough to ban dogs. Since when are animals more important than children and people?

Chicago ANNE JOHNSON

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The least the city can do for those who own dogs is to set aside canine exercise areas within the park system. The dog fancy is as much a part of healthful recreation as are boating, tennis, golf, skeet, baseball or any other pastimes.

To discriminate against dog owners is an evil. Many of us live in congested areas, as I do, on a one-way street, where illegal parking is rampant, and where cars, including police cars, race madly day and night. It is impossible to exercise an animal on such streets.

The alternative is to use the parkways — and face the wrath of janitors forbidding use of their handkerchief plots. Many dogs have been poisoned by this breed of dog haters. There are no vacant lots and no alleys where I live.

Over the course of the years, my dogs have given great pleasure to countless individuals of all ages encountered in the parks. I have never met any dog of any breed that gave me one moment of concern. Lasting friendships between owners have been formed. I wish I could say the same for nonowners.

If I had to make a choice, I should take the dog population any time compared with those to whom the park system is now wholly dedicated.

A pox on the commissioners and their sachems.

P.M.C.
Chicago

'Now, silent majority, now'

If ever there was a time for the silent majority to speak up, this is it!

Regardless of your political party or whether you voted for President Nixon, if you are as fearful of the Cambodian quicksand as I am, let the President know it now.

Let us make that one point clear.

MRS. C. LEMPERA
Chicago

How to gain 25 million consumers

By Carl T. Rowan

WASHINGTON — The Neanderthal element of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce got a tongue-lashing the other day — and not from any black militant or campus revolutionary.

Donald M. Kendall, president of PepsiCo., lambasted it for "taking so shrill and violent a position in opposition to the President's proposed welfare legislation."

The significant thing about Kendall's speech before the Chamber of Commerce of Whittier, Calif., is that he did not pander to old "free enterprise" prejudices or engage in phony slander against those on welfare in his effort to sell the Nixon program.

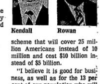
He simply stated some truths, many of them surely unpalatable to some in his audience.

KENDALL quoted President Nixon as saying that this country can ill afford to institutionalize a permanent poverty class, adding:

"How much more desirable it would be to broaden the base of our prosperity and to include as taxpayers these citizens who are chronically improverished. How much better to eliminate much of the hidden costs of poverty which are its by-products: massive welfare structures, enormous health expenses, the sky-rocketing costs of crime, violence and law-enforcement.

"But the most tragic hidden cost is the erosion of the national spirit — the prevalence of hopelessness and despair, or of hatred and rage against our system. It is difficult to see how industry can continue to prosper and expand in an environment of unrest and overt hostility."

Kendall cited simple self-interest as the main reason why he supports a new welfare



Kendall Rowan

scheme that will cover 25 million Americans instead of 10 million and cost $10 billion instead of $5 billion.

"I believe it is good for business, as well as for the 13 per cent of our population who will benefit by it," Kendall said.

He emphasized his belief that "the growing gap between those who are affluent and those who live in dire and grinding poverty cannot continue in this nation."

THEN HE went on to destroy "the deep-rooted myths and misconceptions about welfare."

He pointed out that of the 25 million Americans who live below the official poverty line, "fully 15 million come from families in which there is a full or part-time wage earner. This is a working family — not a handout family — a working family whose income is too low to support a family (above) the most minimum poverty level.

"Under the present law this working family receives no aid, no assistance. It does the nation's dirty work, the jobs that are menial, low-paying, dead-ended — but vital to our economy — and we penalize them for their industry. This makes no sense. The new proposal remedies that defect."

The other 10 million poverty dwellers are the aged, blind, totally disabled, children under 18 and mothers of tots, not vast legions of able-bodied bums.

KENDALL takes the view that as 25 million Americans are lifted out of poverty, business gains 25 million consumers.

"If we wanted a better prop under our economy, we couldn't find one," he said.

When there is so much gloom on the domestic scene, perhaps there is hope in the fact that the National Assn. of Manufacturers, the Committee for Economic Development and other business groups have endorsed the principle of a guaranteed annual income in the same spirit of enlightened self-interest.

When, if ever, will the Chamber of Commerce wise up?